OPIRG Windsor history

I started to work and volunteer in various capacities beginning in late 2002. There I learned many things regarding the organization, but also volunteered my time in various capacities to both help myself and the organization as well as the general community.

Here are some key points that I know of or heard from those inside the organization that even current-day people at the small organization or university may not know about.

- OPIRG started sometime in the 1970s and was a branch or offshoot of Ralph Nader's PIRGs in the USA that started in 1972 and spread to many college/university campuses in the 1970s.
- At the time I was there, the paid coordinator informed me the PIRG that started in the 1970s at University of Windsor was closed in 1982 due to a "conservative student government" being pressured to close them. Why was that? Ostensibly it was due to the fact the students and OPIRG at the time was raising awareness of the nuclear industry's "dirty secrets." As stated, OPIRG was closed sometime in 1982.
- It was a man named "Jim B." that ran OPIRG Windsor for some time until it closed in 1982.
- OPIRG started up again in 1993, this time with Jim D. at the sole paid coordinator. He told many people in the board and the University of his "Marxist tendencies." It was also clear he aligned himself and subsequently the entire organization with other Marxist organizations. The latter organization was run by a group of people such as Michael L and others who maintained a "communist library" and were open regarding their communist sympathies.
- Sometime in the late 1990s OPIRG was situated at Iona College, but then sometime after that, moved out to location on-campus called "The Grad House."
- In 2004 they moved to a new location on Sandwich and Mill street, to an organization which was a non-profit mennonite-run organization that sourced products such as "fair trade coffee" from lesser-developed countries and proceeds donated to charities.
- For the whole time I was volunteering and once during 1 summer, worked as a summer student, I noticed a lack of genuine, independent motivations from board members and volunteers. It seemed they simply attended the organization solely for reference purposes for future work opportunities rather than trying to further the organization away from the "hermit kingdom" it seemingly became by the sole, paid coordinator.
- There wasn't much effort to try to find other ways to fund-raise to hire more staff or conduct genuine "activist activities." Many people criticized the organization and mainly the paid coordinator for being "hermit kingdom dictator."
- It was not perhaps until 2010 when more efforts were made to expand the organization into the general community by obtaining a "community garden."
- Overall, my time there lead me to think that: many people attending universities are not as education nor open minded as they claim. There's much contradiction at Universities to lead one to think that they are nothing more than societal backwaters focused on corporate reductionism. Many professors act more like elevated librarians. Present an idea, and they will reference a couple of books that discuss something similar. This tendency isn't recent; an 18th-century preacher noted, "no group of people thinks less than those who are supposed to study learning or knowledge."
- Professors serve as the well-compensated leaders of this intellectual community, enjoying the prestige that comes from their mentors. Students often develop a lasting tendency to rely on others for knowledge. They believe that true wisdom comes solely from external sources, not from their own insights. The idea of the Great Books they haven't explored makes them uneasy. In their lives, their only goal seems to be measuring themselves against the achievements of Great Men. A professor once remarked that I failed an exam because "only great men can express such ideas."

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- As a result, students adopt a passive and disjointed mindset. They focus on reconciling conflicting perspectives. One day, I had a realization: these so-called great men existed in the same world I do. This is a world I can observe and understand myself. Should I dare to think independently?
- This disconnection occurs both in time and space. By constantly engaging with the "great" ideas and actions of the past, students are led to believe that nothing significant or urgent remains to be accomplished. There are no manifestos to create, no revolutions to initiate. While the current world is in desperate need of guidance, the new generation is busy writing annotations to the works of those who have long since passed.